

Thus spoke Saint Vādirāja Tirtha.

(1480-1600 AD)

कचिकट कधुरीणः कार्मुकन्यस्तवाणः क्षपितदिति जलैः शत्रुमेव
जलाधारेचितसेतुः जलकीतोषहेतुः नदि पथि गुणसाधुः पातु मं रामनन्दः
Introductory उद्योग्यः
-रक्षण- 28

Kumbhāsi, a small village on the Udipi-Goondapur Road, famous as one of the seven pilgrim-centres in Parashurāma-kshetra, was the birthplace of this literary Saint. He lived for 120 years spreading the message of Sri Madhvāchārya, whom he called his Rājā or King - वादी महो यस्य राजा - in the opening verses in his Commentary on the latter's Mahābhārata Tātparya Nirṇaya. (verse 4, page 1, Udipi Majestic Press Edition of 1952). Sri Madhva had arranged that the worship of Sri Krishna in Udipi should go by rotation among his eight disciples, each officiating for only two months. This period of two months was felt to be too short by this Saint, who decided that the period should be two years thereafter. The temple itself was enlarged by the addition of two images - that of Garuda (brought from Ayodhya) and Mukhyaprāna on the two sides of the main image of Sri Krishna and the image of Sri Madhva was also installed by this Very Saint on the northern door. The Saint was devoted to Hayagreeva whose image was worshipped daily by him. Even granting that his religious activities started in 1500 AD in his 20th year (though there are evidences to prove that he began to compose poems even in his teens) we can see for ourselves that his cultural activities continued unabated for full hundred years.

The period of his apprenticeship might have started about 1475 AD soon after his initiation by his Ashramaguru Vagisha Tirtha. Perhaps his very first literary work seems to have been his Tirtha Prabandha, which commemorates his worship at the various shrines he visited. This small work, in four sections corresponding to the holy pilgrim centres in the four quarters, consists of 240 verses and can be, if properly edited, a Pilgrim guide to all Mādhvas in particular. Even in this very early age, when he might have been barely 20 or so, the literary level he has exhibited is of a very high order. The poetic ~~Concise~~ flight of his imagination are soaring very high and the jingling assonance of the words used in his poem is simply admirable and one is tempted to declare that such Anuprāsas (alliterations) are unrivalled in the whole range of Sanskrit literature. In this opening chapter, we quote some of such attractive words and invite the readers to enjoy the music of the verses.

Badari, The sacred place where Sri Kṛṣṇa even today (up on the Himalayan Mountain) is practising penance

अमरीभ्रमरीपुञ्जकुमरीनिभिरसिता ।

वदरी वदरी किं किमधरीकुरुते न सा ॥ उतर. 41

Though I may not be able to bring out this beauty in my prosaic translation, I crave the indulgence of the reader and present my translation for what it is worth: This Badari, which is decorated by the holy rays emanating from the celestial female bees (chattering round the flowers there) - which place does it not make inferior by its side (it makes every other place lose its sanctity). Comment is needless.

The river Tungā is thus described - पूर्व - ॥

नतोऽस्मि तुङ्गां विलसत्तरङ्गां अधौघभङ्गां हरिपादसंगमम्
शितोऽस्मि भद्रां हृतपापनिद्रां विमुक्तिपथां विमलैकसाध्यम्

I resort to the river Tungā with its shining wave,
the river which destroys hoards of sins, the river that
flows at the foot of Lord Hari.

The other Bhadrā river dispels the sin of Nidra or sleep.
It is a high road to Mukti and reachable only by the pure.

The alliteration in तुङ्गा, तरङ्गा, भद्रा, and संग in the first
line can be compared only to the similar jingling words
भद्रा, निद्रा; in the latter half of the second line पथोऽल्लिखत्
with साध्यम्.

The lake पंथा caught the imagination of our Saint
to such an extent that he must have gazed long at
it, repeating its name too many times, and reversing it
he said पापं; the lake, according to him, makes पंथा or
पापं in us अक्षोमुखी, hold its head down in shame.
The lake confers prosperity on those who resort to
it, it is संपत्करी and dispels all the sins of those
who bathe therein. Let us now hear what the saint
himself has to say:

पम्या सम्पत्करी स मे किं पापं न हरे नृणाम् ॥
याऽक्षोमुखी करोत्येव तन्नामो वारणमात्र न ॥ पूर्व १५

In his same Purva Prabandha 37th Verse,
the God Shiva enshrined on Tiruvannamalai Hill
is described thus:

पाणिगणवरभूषः पार्वतीश्लाघ्यवेषः खलजनकुतरोषः
सदरुणनिरिवासः शक्रसूर्याद्यधीशः परिहृतभयपाशः
खण्डितात्मीयदेवः

पातु मां पार्वतीशः
May that Lord of Parvati, decorating Himself with a host
of serpents, lovelier still by the body of Parvati imbedded
with His own (on the left side), who gets angry with the
wicked and who has (mercilessly) cut away all
His own defects, that God who dwells on the sacred Hill

That Lord who is the overlord of Shakra (Indra) Surja and others, That Lord again who removes the shackles of Samsara of birth and death - protect us!

The Lord Padmanabha in Anantashayana in Trivandrum is worshipped in the last (45th) verse in the last Dakshina Prabandha in the following mellifluous verse:

सुखगणपरिवारः शोभमानोरुहारः

करिकरसमदृष्टः काञ्चनोद्दीप्तवस्त्रः ।

हुभजनकृतगानः शेषभोगे शयानः

प्रभुः अयमविनाशः प्रीयतामिदिरेशः ॥

It is but fitting that this lovely Pilgrim guide should end with the clarion call that Vishnu or Padmanabha is the supreme God as taught by his Guru Sriman Madhvacharya. The verse may be rendered thus: May that Supreme Lord with his retinue of heavenly gods with a large pearlnecklace (perhaps from Tamraparni ^{river} near by) decorating his body, possessed of hands similar to the elephant's trunk, wearing clothes of yellow golden hints, ^{sing} or praised by the meritorious, and sleeping on the hood of the Serpent Adishesha, He that has no destruction and who is the Lord of Indira or Supreme Lakshmi - let Him be pleased (with my) work Tirtha Prabandha.

I would also prefer to conclude my lyric note introducing the Saint at this point, but the next Shloka, also at the very end of this lyric, sums up the excellences of the verses admirably.

गानवृत्तं स्वयन्नाक्रमपरिचितस्तु क्षेत्रमाहम्युक्तं

शब्दालंकारवद्यं शमलकुरुहरल्लाघवीयार्थहृदयम्

श्रीनाथप्रतिहेतोः हयवदनकृपांभोलिसंभूतरत्नम्

यत्र तीर्थप्रवचनं बहुगुणभरितं नदिराजो यतीन्द्रः

Perhaps the not difficult word शमल meaning sin need be translated here. If this effort of mine pleases some Madhwas at least by holding the mirror to the Saint's poetic art, I would deem myself blessed.

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